DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 792 CS 203 291

AUTHOR Gambell, Trevor J.
TITLE Developing Children's Language through the Elementary School Media Centre.
PUB DATE Jun 76
NOTE 15p.; Report prepared at the University of Alberta

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; Elementary Education; *English Instruction; *Instructional Media; *Language Arts; Library Programs; *School Libraries; Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

This paper suggests practical ways in which children's language skills can be developed through the guidance of the school librarian and the resources of the school media center. Both children and teachers need to be actively involved in the development of the media center's programs: care and use of audiovisual equipment, visual displays of language skills activities, projects centered around topical events, and so on. Other activities for use in the media center, such as discussion about books and art, guest visitations, poetry reading, written expression, and the making of books by pupils, can be used to promote oral language, listening, and reading skills. Similarly, a language arts fair, dramatic expression, and games can easily become the focus of media center programs. While current research and literature offer little in a discussion of the role that the elementary school library can play in the development of children's language, storytelling and picture book stories, transparency stories, and discussion of books have been shown to be effective in encouraging the development of language skills. (KS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED137792

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE THROUGH THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MEDIA CENTRE

Trevor J. Gambell

Graduate Student

Department of Elementary Education

University of Alberta

Edmonton, Alberta

June, 1976

CS 203 291

INTRODUCTION

If one had to make use of a key word which would establish a link between language development and the school media centre, I would choose the word "involvement". It is essential that the librarian become involved with the language arts being taught in individual classrooms, and indeed with all teachers and all content areas of the curriculum. The librarian also needs to be involved in every committee in the school, so that programming and planning can always involve the school media centre.

The librarian, as a resource consultant, should not be locked to the library but should be welcome in all classrooms as part of the teaching team. Quite often the librarian with an interest in language development will be able to identify children whose oral language or speech needs developing or remediating, and can suggest instructional techniques to the teacher.

Children also need to be involved with the school media centre. In the school I visited, all children were scheduled for one half day per year to be a host or hostess in the media centre, responsible for helping other pupils to locate materials, reshelving books, locating snags, stamping cards and books, putting up displays, charts, etc. Some "rowdy" children even came twice; the media centre can act as a motivational force for learning, with ramifications throughout the whole school.

Children also can become involved by being given responsibility for using and caring for audio-visual equipment. In Parkview the children from Grade 3 up were being taught to operate all types of AV equipment, and as each child passed a competency test on each piece of equipment, that item was circled on his Operator's Licence. Such equipment familiarity would make the pupil's research skills so much more varied, and this diversity of skills

would be particularly useful in upper elementary, and in junior secondary grades.

Teachers need also to be involved in language and the media centre. Apart from the library as a source of instructional materials, the teacher might also offer interesting language experiences through the media centre. Parkview has a Travel Week, where a teacher shows slides and pictures of his/her travels to interested children each week in the media centre. Listening and speaking skills are being developed in this setting, as the children ask questions of the presenter.

The media centre program also needs to be flexible enough to allow the media centre to become involved with current school events. One librarian sees it natural to have any school-related event in the media centre, regardless of the subject or content of the event. Topical displays and activities can be capitalized on by the librarian, and many language and related activities can ensue. Hallowe'en, Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day offer an example of topical events. Poetry, by well-known poets and by the children themselves, books related to the significant aspects of the event, and children's written language displays can form part of the media centre's involvement.

This article will now focus on ideas and activities which are aimed at developing children's language in the school media centre setting. Children's language must be seen in its broad context of reading skills, research skills, listening skills, oral language and speaking skills, functional, creative and personal written language, drama, and choral speaking. A good language program will aim at developing, to a varying extent, all of these facets of language.

The article will be presented in two parts. Part 1 presents ideas and activities arising from observations and discussions of a library program

integrated firmly with the language arts. Part 2 will look at the literature available which deals with elementary school libraries and development of the language arts.

PART 1: IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Readings, Book Talks, and Discussions.

These activitiesgenerally develop oral language and discussion, as well as listening skills.

The librarian should try to schedule all elementary classes to the media centre once weekly for reading to pupils. Reading involves not merely the text of the story. The story should also lead into a book talk, where the librarian and the children discuss book layout, titles, page design and utilization, credits, colour, etc. The illustrations, and essential features of the story and the presentation, need discussing. What methods does the illustrator use - collage, paper tearing, wrinkled aluminum foil with crayon over-rub, waterpaint wash, lino and block printing? Can we tell anything about the author and/or illustrator from the book, the illustrations, and the presentation?

To extend oral language the librarian can also ask one or more children to read a book, or "read" a picture book to a primary class, or to tell a story to a group of peers or younger children. I have seen the reading of a story to primary children handled very successfully by Grade 6 pupils. Upper elementary school children seem to like being read to just as primary children do.

2. Guest Visitations.

A really meaningful experience can be given children by inviting an author(ess) and/or an illustrator to the school, or more specifically to the media centre. Listening and speaking skills can be extended in this setting. Before the day of the visitation the children might all be asked to have read several of the author's books, and to have thought of some questions. Displays can be set up; the children might want to present her with several books they have all signed, and it would be very appropriate to present the guest with several pupil-made books. (These I will discuss later).

3. Art Discussions.

The media centre is also the holder of art prints and framed paintings, and the librarian may wish to make use of these to develop oral expression. This type of discussion leads very well into discussions of book illustrations, and the methods employed by book illustrators. By comparing several paintings the librarian might lead the discussion into style identification, artist identification, use of colour, shading, subject matter, mood(s) conveyed, personal impressions, and memories and experiences aroused in the pupils.

4. Poetry Reading.

Listening and oral reading skills can also be developed on a regular basis through poetry reading, by the librarian and by children. The librarian may also wish to have parents in to read poetry to children, or to act as an audience for choral speaking. Mood and atmosphere can be created by reading by candlelight, to music, etc. Very important is that children be able to read their own poems to other children. As with authors, a valuable experience could be given children by inviting a poet to the media centre for poetry readings and for discussion. And this type of experience would be excellent motivation for pupils' writing and written expression in poetry form.

5. Written Expression.

Written expression quite often follows sequentially from oral expression, as the child attempts to put his orally expressed and modified thoughts into a communicable written structure. One way to encourage written language in the media centre is through the Writing Club, which should encourage the creative and personal aspects of written expression rather than the functional. (See Appendix). It is of utmost importance that what a child hands in for reading, or wants read, be read by the librarian and commented upon. The librarian might have a large, colourful mail box in a prominent place where children who want their written creations read can leave them for the librarian. After being read and commented upon, these works can be displayed in a featured display area in the media centre.

Some creative writing can be initiated by the librarian in classrooms. Paper tearing, previously mentioned, can be used to focus children's attention to the torn contours, which are used to elicit words from the children suggested by the contours in assocaition with the size and colour of the paper. As children tear their own paper, and write down words suggested by the contours, creative writing follows as the children are asked to create a story from the paper contours. The principle stated earlier applies here also: if a child presents a written work, he deserves to have written and/or spoken comments in return.

Personal writing, being a very personal expression, should be left up to the pupil to decide whether or not he wants it read by the librarian, or teacher. The Personal Mail Box will prove useful for personal writing submissions. The librarian can encourage teachers to allow fifteen minutes daily, first thing in the morning, for personal writing. Each child can further be encouraged, by the librarian, to submit one of his personal writings each week to the media centre for inclusion in a school magazine,

compiled by the media centre.

6. Pupil-made Books and Picture Books.

Leading from written expression, creative writing, a media centre school magazine, and discussion from book talks is the preparation and production of individual pupil books. Children in the upper elementary grades can make picture books with preschool or beginning children as the projected audience. One excellent picture reference book I inspected was titled The Animal's ABC Book, subtitled Alphabet Book for Kindergarten. This book, made by a Grade 6 pupil, seemed very effective and very readable at the Kindergarten level.

Books with stories created by pupils may or may not follow a common theme or title, such as The Adventures of the Kapit Kid. Illustrations can be encouraged, either drawn by the pupils themselves, done in collaboration with another child as illustrator, or cut from magazines, catalogues, etc. The child binds the book in a manner and makes it usable by other children, and fairly durable. He/she might decide to use an appropriate page shape, such as a pumpkin shape for Hallowe'en stories. The child may even decide to write a personal book using photos taken by himself or by a friend, such as The Birthday Present. Children can be encouraged to use all bibliographic detail, such as: Copyright © 1976

All right reserved

Library of Parkview

No. PB39, etc.

I even saw one book which included biographical details of the author. Some books I perused were typed.

What does the librarian do with these pupil-made books? He gives each book a library listing, such as PB39 (Pupil Book #39). A catalogue card goes in the card catalogue file, for author and title. The pupil books are then

shelved and are available to all children. The librarian might even have a copyright book where children can register their books.

7. The Language Arts Fair.

The Language Arts Fair might only be one of several content area fairs held in the media centre throughout the year. A theme is needed, and it might be seasonally inspired, and with an element of ramance and imagination, such as "A Taste of Spring Dragons". Other schools may even be invited to participate, but there must not be a competitive aspect introduced. There might be a display of creative writing on the theme words Taste, Spring, and Dragons, displayed on large sheets of paper. Children might be encouraged to display and explain language games and crossword puzzles that they have made. Poetry written by children can be displayed, and books which fit in with the theme can be on display. There should be no judging of children's submissions, but all participants should receive a certificate for participation.

8. Children's Research and Language.

After each elementary class has been given an initial introduction to the services and utilization of the media centre, as well as to the public library, the librarian may wish to ask each teacher in the upper elementary grades to have their children undertake a research project following a theme, such as A Famous Person. Children should be asked to use a media approach, and preferably a multi-media approach, and to use as many different kinds of materials and approaches as possible. The children can decide on how they will be graded for the research project: n% presentation?

n % preparation?

n % content?

n % research?

n % media utilization?

Any one, or any combination of these, might be chosen by the child. The presentation is made to the group, with the librarian as hopefully an invited guest. If the researchis of a high standard, the librarian may decide to use it as reference material, available to all pupils, and represented in the card catalogue.

Research should be used sparingly, and the librarian can guide teachers in how to set objectives involving media research. Much research can have an immediate focus, in that a child is asked to select and develop only five pieces if information on a topic, and return directly to the classroom and orally present his information to the class.

Research skills combine the language skills of reading, writing (functional), oral expression, discussion, listening and speaking. Research correlates language and the media centre with other subject areas in a way that should be meaningful and useful to the child.

Children can also be taught to make strip films and slides, which will require research on the part of the child, and written and oral expression at the presentation level, where the child(ren) prepare written materials or tape recordings to go along with the film or slides.

9. Dramatic Expression.

One librarian I know holds small puppet shows in his media centre. The children make the puppets, in their art periods or at home in their own time, and also devise stories to produce the puppet show. This is an excellent means of producing written expression and oral expression, and the children are truly expressevels free when pupeteering, being unaware of themselves. Children can rehearse in one of the small conference rooms (if available), and the puppets can go on display and become a permanent part of the media centre, along with the plays (stories). Thus through creative drama the librarian is able to develop greater and wider pupil interest in

the media centre.

10. Vocabulary Development.

Vocabulary development ideas in the media centre might well correlate with projects in other content areas, such as science and social studies. A project approach can be utilized, where large words on large charts form a temporary decor in the media centre, and books and materials on the vocabulary development theme are on prominent display. These word displays may also focus on a common root word, or might have an etymological focus. Vocabulary development activities and displays will most probably be limited to a particular grade at a time.

11. Activities and Games.

The media centre is the repository of language activity kits and language games, and the librarian can be instrumental in introducing the useful language activities and games to teachers and to pupils. As the librarian is not chained to the library, he/she can introduce activities and games to children at all grade levels in the classrooms. The next step is to encourage children to invent and create their own language activities and games, and these can then be displayed, used and stored in the media centre, and catalogued for reference along with all other available materials.

SUMMARY

This article is essentially an ideas one, and has suggested practical ways in which children's language can be developed and extended through the guidance of the librarian and the resources of the school media centre. Many of the ideas elaborated in this article were generated in a lengthy and very informative conversation with Dr. Ronald A. Jobe, Media Specialist, Parkview Elementary-Junior High School, Edmonton, Alberta. Dr. Jobe considers himself a media specialsit, rather than a librarian, because he feels that he must

be an integral and influential member of the teaching staff of the school, advising teachers as well as students in all aspects of the media.

One must ultimately realize that the role of the librarian is not, and cannot, be as broad as to have the librarian involved in all aspects of instruction, or in all content areas. This is no more desirable than it is practical. But the librarian can act as a catalyst to get new ideas moving, and can germinate ideas, approaches, activities and methods in teacher's minds, sometimes merely be making available materials to teachers, or by introducing concepts and/or materials in a content area.

PART 2: LOOKING AT THE LITERATURE

The literature has little to offer in a discussion of the role that the elementary school library can play in the development of children's language. This paucity of information in itself is of significance, in that it demonstrates the need for thought and attention to the development of programs, and sharing of ideas, to develop children's language through the school media centre.

The preschool and elementary years seem to be the really critical time for acquiring language skills. It therefore becomes crucial to utilize every opportunity to foster creative language growth in these early years.

Storytelling and picture book programs have been used by librarians and teachers at the early primary levels, and these language programs do make a contribution to language development. There is no reason to stop these programs before upper elementary school years.

Research has shown not only a growth in vocabulary development but

> improvement in ability to produce mo e complex sentences. This appears to happen as the child is involved in the story as an act of communication - the child is immersed in a sea of language. There is a chance to ask questions and have ideas clarified. During discussion and creative play based on the story the child has a chance to try new words. This language becomes a part of him. (Bellon, 1975, p.150).

Transparency stories can be very effective. These stories can be cumulative, and as each new character is introduced the story teller introduces a new transparency or overlay. Oral and creative language, and listening skills, can be jointly developed. Shadow stories are easily done on a screen, using an overhead projector, or cut out in thick paper and placed on the glass surface of the overhead. The teacher can introduce the activities, and later on children can prepare their own transparencies and cut-outs, and present their own stories.

Book discussions integrate the reading skills and language skills in the library setting. Discussions should allow children to grow in their sensitivity to language and to ideas, to freely explore their feelings for a book, free to examine their memories as to the important content, free to respond. teachers should be aware of comments that are likely to encourage children only to please us, as teachers. Children must feel free to have feelings about a book and they must feel welcome to express their feelings.

The best time usually to seriously discuss a book is <u>after</u> reading it. Talking about the book then keeps it going a while longer. Teachers can select a group of books to be read aloud, and then followed by discussion, using a thematic approach: (1) books about family life; (2) three to four books that confront a human concern such as coping with one's fears, or of children living with one parent; (3) seasonal setting is the same; (4) basic historical content is the same. The discussion may fall into a comparison of the three to four books. A good discussion leader should limit himself to questions, not editorializing.

Ask questions which help a child move up the thinking ladder. A hierarchy of question types follows:

(1) Memory type - children recall or recognize information;

(2) Translation type - child changes information into another symbol system,
eg. Tell ti in your own words!

(3) Interpretation type - children asked to make comparative relationships,
eg. Compare "x" and "y";

(4) Application type - child solves a problem using previously attained knowledge;

(5) Evaluation type - child asked to make value judgments.

The teacher should keep discussions brief, and leave discussing until after the book(s) is/are read. If possible, it is valuable to meet with subgroups to talk about the book. Talking about a book afterwards may happen; let it happen, but don't labor it.

The types of ideas talked about in Part 2 focus primarily on oral language and listening aspects of language, but the creative teacher will want to expand activities to cover the full range of language skills. The school media centre offers all varieties of media which a language program can utilize. Radio plays, tape recorded, plays and puppet shows videotaped, 8mm. film production with sound dubbing or synchronization are too expansive in scope for the purposes of this article, though their uses are almost inexhaustible. And the school library makes an excellent display room for children's language products.

It is necessary for the teacher of today to know the range of services and resources offered by the school media centre. To utilize the services and resources in language development can provide an extensive program which leads to maximal pupil motivation. A teaching team liaison between teacher and librarian can do much in developing such a program in the language arts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BELLOW, Elner C. Language Development through Storytelling Activities. School Media Quarterly, 3, 2, Winter 1975, 149-156.

JOBE, Ronald A. Personal communication, February 24, 1976.

WILSON, Roy B. Discussing Books with Children. School Media Quarterly, 1, 3, Spring 1973, 209-212.

APPENDIX

Aspects of Written Language
(after Ronald Jobe)